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Disarmament Commission

235th meeting

Monday, 26 June 2000, 10 a.m.

New York

Chairman: Mr. Zarif ..... (Islamic Republic of Iran)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Opening of the session

The Chairman: I declare open the 235th plenary meeting, the first substantive meeting of the 2000 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission.

Adoption of the agenda (A/CN.10/L.46)

The Chairman: At our organizational session, on 2 December and 15 February, due to lack of agreement on two substantive agenda items, items 4 and 5 of the draft provisional agenda were left blank, and it was decided to postpone the consideration of those issues until a later date. As a result of intensive consultations during the last few months, and particularly during the last week, consensus has been reached on them. Accordingly, the Commission has before it the provisional agenda.

If there is no objection, may I take it that the Commission is prepared to adopt the provisional agenda?

It was so decided.

Statement by the Chairman

The Chairman: I would like to thank all members for their flexibility and cooperation during the organizational session, particularly in the course of our informal consultations. The agreement on the agenda reflects the readiness of all delegations to engage in constructive deliberation and provides a conducive environment to make headway in the difficult work ahead of us. I rely on members' continued support, cooperation and accommodation to ensure the successful conclusion of this substantive session.

Allow me also, on the Commission's behalf, to extend my sincere gratitude to Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, who, along with his able colleagues, has provided substantive support to the Commission's session; and to the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, which is responsible for servicing the Disarmament Commission. In addition, I should not fail to thank our Secretary, Mr. Timur Alasaniya and his able colleagues in the secretariat for their tireless efforts in ensuring the smooth and constructive operation of the Commission.

The United Nations Disarmament Commission has, since its inception in 1978 following the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD I), provided a universal forum for in-depth consideration of issues and offered invaluable recommendations in the field of disarmament. Today the Commission, especially after its organizational reforms, can better serve the process of disarmament and help build on its achievements. It shoulders an onerous responsibility. As the universal deliberative disarmament setting, the Commission has a unique position to provide for broader participation and consensus-building. Furthermore, being a deliberative body, it is not bound by the limits of disarmament

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negotiations. It can thus mainline new and innovative ideas into disarmament diplomacy and stimulate a reinvigorated international debate on the disarmament and security agenda. The Commission is therefore in a position to inspire a constructive change in the existing international security paradigm, which is still haunted by the balance of terror and exclusive security arrangements.

Adding to the importance of the Commission's deliberations, in particular this year, is the fact that the Conference on Disarmament has not been able to adopt its programme of work for three years in a row, and all the submissions to break the deadlock have proved unavailing. I hope that the final agreement of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) 2000 Review Conference and a successful Disarmament Commission session can break the ice and encourage Disarmament Commission members to nail down a balanced programme of work.

Our agenda this year is in and of itself a testament to the opportunities and formidable challenges before us all. The International Court of Justice advisory opinion on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons was a turning point in the international campaign against nuclear arms, a campaign which started from the very first session of the General Assembly, subsequently reinforced by Article VI of the NPT as well as the decision on Principles and Objectives of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. The Court's Advisory Opinion, in fact, charted a new course for nuclear disarmament in the aftermath of the Cold War, underlining the legal obligation to proceed in good faith towards a world free from nuclear weapons. The declaration by President Bedjaoui, then presiding judge of the International Court of Justice, calling nuclear weapons "the ultimate evil" for their indiscriminate effects on humanity and the natural environment, put this legal obligation in its proper moral perspective.

A more recent achievement has been the successful conclusion of the NPT 2000 Review Conference, with consensus on key issues. The Conference succeeded in agreeing on a range of guidelines and required steps to rid humanity of the nuclear nightmare, which should be pursued vigorously through various unilateral, bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral initiatives. It illustrated once again that the NPT was never meant to perpetuate the classification of States as nuclear and non-nuclear, and that the obligation to create a nuclear-weapon free world has always been a fundamental underpinning of the global disarmament and non-proliferation agenda and regime.

The statement by some nuclear-weapon States that they would cease production of fissile material and place their withdrawn fissile material from military stockpiles, under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) supervision, can be regarded as a starting point that needs to be followed by further measures, such as de-alerting of nuclear weapons, abandoning first-use doctrines, and deeper reductions and elimination of tactical nuclear weapons.

As for bilateral undertakings, the welcome ratification of START II by the Russian Federation's Duma should be further augmented, hopefully, by bilateral negotiations between the United States and the Russian Federation on START III. Moreover, some coordination and cooperation on nuclear disarmament has been instigated among the five nuclear-weapon States. Though for the time being it is largely restricted to coordination of positions on nuclear disarmament negotiations, the arrangement has the potential to eventually evolve into a forum for serious negotiations and consensus-building on concrete collective nuclear reduction measures.

In the multilateral domain, the Conference on Disarmament remains the sole negotiating body, with nuclear disarmament atop its agenda. It should, therefore, be allowed to make a substantive and meaningful contribution to nuclear disarmament. The involvement of the Conference on Disarmament might be perceived, at first glance, not to satisfy the interests of some States.

But its engagement in these negotiations would certainly promote confidence and in turn pave the way for general and comprehensive disarmament. Meanwhile, it is high time for the Conference on Disarmament to commence negotiations on a long-sought fissile material cut-off treaty.

Acknowledging the imperative of averting the nuclear threat, the Secretary-General has suggested in his millennium report the convening of an international conference on the subject. This submission merits serious and positive consideration, including consideration by the Commission at this session.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones inches us closer to the lofty objective of a world free from nuclear weapons. These frameworks are already

in existence in some parts of the globe. At the same time, the creation of similar zones in other regions, in particular the Middle East, must be pursued with greater vigour and energy. In this respect, the Disarmament Commission guidelines on nuclear-weapon-free zones, finalized a year ago, could serve as a manual.

This is merely an inexhaustive list of areas of possible action. I sincerely hope that our deliberations at this session will lead to the articulation, and facilitate the adoption, of innovative approaches for the attainment of nuclear disarmament.

As for our second item, for the last several years the General Assembly called for transparency in armaments and confidence-building. Numerous regional initiatives, in particular in Africa, have been launched to enhance transparency in conventional armaments or to wind down the increasing flow and accumulation of conventional weapons. Transparency in certain categories of conventional weapons has also been pursued for some years, with varying degrees of success. A United Nations study group is at present reviewing the likelihood of expansion of the United Nations Register to other areas. Moreover, given the enormity of the human toll and suffering, confidence-building in the increasingly important area of small arms has received a sharpened focus. And a host of propositions on the problem of illicit trafficking in small arms, including the holding of a United Nations conference on this matter in the year 2001, have been advanced. It is heartening to note that the preparatory work for the Conference has started. On our part, I believe we should also provide substantive input for the Conference.

While we address important areas of disarmament at this forum, it is imperative that the international community take a renewed look at the dominant approach to international relations and articulates a new global security paradigm. For centuries, concepts such as enemies, security dilemmas, the arms race, deterrence and balance of power dominated much of the discourse in international politics and played a determining role in shaping relations between nations. Bloc rivalries and exclusive security arrangements, feeding fear and the arms race, have all been products of a global security paradigm based on exclusion — not only exclusion of some State actors from global security arrangements, but also exclusion of non-State actors and civil society from the global debate and decision-making on security.

Security perceptions and disarmament are very much mutually reinforcing. Thus the future course of disarmament norm-setting will hinge, above all, on the evolution of international security. The ending of the cold war has given a boost to some areas of disarmament, but its continuity requires forging an encompassing international security arrangement that will promise security to all nations worldwide. I elaborated on this imperative prerequisite at the Conference on Disarmament more than a year ago and submitted the concept of global security networking, which attempts to go beyond the narrowly defined interests of existing military alliances. The evolution of security systems and their transformation into global security networks would induce States to take further steps in ensuring sustained programmes and progress in arms control and disarmament.

Taking the very first step into the new millennium, we stand at a defining moment in the history of mankind. A mix of opportunities and challenges lies ahead. Much has changed but much more remains to be changed. Suggestions are made to the effect that security issues need no longer be seen in black and white or as zero sum scenarios, that the advantages of cooperation and partnership could certainly far exceed possible gains of armaments and rivalry and that today the prospects for arms control and disarmament in all fields are brighter.

However, the worst is still far from over. We are steering through a defining transitional, yet formative, stage. Things could conceivably go wrong and unravel the positive achievements made so far. Insistence on military applications of information and space technologies, with their sobering ramifications, and a half-hearted commitment to and selective implementation of the existing disarmament agreements might trigger a snowball effect, resulting in the erosion of credibility of disarmament treaties and commencement of a fresh round of the arms race.

The time has come to invest in the future, and confidence-building is the key for such an investment. We are offered the greatest opportunity of all times; it is our chance, and we have to make much of it. The time has come to stamp out, once and for all, the fallacy that improved armaments — in particular, nuclear ones — bring greater security. Progressive and

systematic pursuit of disarmament negotiations and the urgent need to accelerate nuclear disarmament are the challenges to be met. These and other challenges, along with complexities, setbacks and surprises, could assert themselves against our hopes and our wishes.

Political will and commitment, as well as the involvement of civil society, are the key factors in winning this uphill battle. Civil society is an increasingly active participant in disarmament diplomacy. To secure the achievements made and to further advance disarmament, it is imperative to welcome and enhance the involvement of civil society at both the national and international levels. The participation of non-governmental organizations, institutions and individuals in the NPT 2000 Review Conference was an enriching experience. I hope that this process will be further institutionalized, providing for their participation in all disarmament forums, including the Conference on Disarmament.

To conclude, in our collective effort to build an inclusive global environment it is absolutely imperative to engage in an inclusive dialogue, drawing upon the rich and diversified contributions of all actors, be they States, civil society, international organizations, academia and all other segments of humanity, which stand to lose much from the perils of war and armaments and have much to contribute to their elimination.

Organization of work

The Chairman: Document *A/CN.10/2000/CRP.1* was distributed during the resumed organizational session, on 15 February. It should be noted that the Programme of Work is an indicative timetable, and as such is subject to further adjustment, as necessary. The timetable, which was also prepared and distributed by the secretariat at the same meeting, will remain unchanged. As regards the second week, a relevant informal paper will be decided upon by the Bureau by the end of this week, in consultation with the Chairmen of the Working Groups. The secretariat will subsequently issue this paper.

As to the allocation of time for each agenda item, the principle of equal footing and flexibility for practical purposes will be observed. Since both items under consideration are in their first year, one might expect that both Working Groups will require the same amount of time for their meetings. As I have noted, the weekly timetable and programme of work will take into account these considerations, as well as the specific needs of each subsidiary body, through consultations with the Chairmen of the Working Groups.

As will be seen in document A/CN.10/2000/CRP.1, containing the general programme of work, four meetings, including this opening meeting, have been allocated to the general exchange of views. I ask delegations wishing to make statements to inscribe their names on the list of speakers no later than 6 p.m. today. I remind delegations that as a rule 35 copies of the statements should be provided to the secretariat.

May I take it that the Commission is prepared to move in accordance with this programme?

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I wish to briefly comment on the participation of non-governmental organizations in the Commission's work. As in previous years, they are welcome to attend the plenary meetings and meetings of the Committee of the Whole as observers.

General exchange of views

The Chairman: I have the great pleasure and honour to give the floor to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala to open the general debate.

Mr. Dhanapala (Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs): I begin by congratulating you, Mr. Chairman, and your Bureau and by pledging the full cooperation and substantive support of the Department for Disarmament Affairs for your efforts throughout the important deliberations ahead.

I appreciate this opportunity to address the Commission at its first plenary meeting of the new millennium on a date that also marks the fifty-fifth anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Charter in San Francisco.

In his opening remarks on 24 April to the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Secretary-General Kofi Annan warned that much of the established multilateral disarmament machinery had started to rust. He said that this condition was due not to any inherent flaw in the machinery itself, but to the apparent lack of political will to use it. A month

before, in his millennium report, the Secretary-General had stressed that

> "the United Nations was intended to introduce new principles into international relations, making a qualitative difference to their day-to-day conduct." (*A/54/2000, para. 9*)

Those observations, together with those of members of the Commission, frame the proper context within which we must begin our deliberations today. For I am confident that the Commission will have no problems with either rust or obsolescence if its members never lose sight of the collective interests that bind all nations, including the most universal interest of all, the survival of our planet in an age of rapid political and technological change. History is replete with examples of institutions that have failed due to the ascendancy and ultimate triumph of parochial national interests over the common good of humankind. Bitter tragedies all too often result from maximalist approaches to national security, including the pursuit of regional or international supremacy. Such approaches are typically pursued at the expense of common security and set the stage for arms races that can impoverish entire nations.

Our task, therefore, must be to learn from this history. We must rededicate ourselves to the collective solution of some of the gravest problems on the international security agenda. As the Secretary-General has suggested, we must reaffirm our joint commitment to make a genuine qualitative difference as a result of our work. The goal here is not simply to produce a paper consensus, but also to discover paths to solve concrete problems in an all too real world. We must, in particular, build some momentum behind solutions that can be constructively pursued elsewhere in the United Nations disarmament machinery — ultimately the Conference on Disarmament.

The first issue on this year's agenda concerns ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament, a priority that dates back not just to the tenth special session of the General Assembly, in 1978, but also to the first General Assembly resolution, which was approved in 1946 in the shadows of two deadly atomic clouds. Given the horrendous human and environmental effects from the detonation of even one nuclear weapon, the world community has rightly placed nuclear disarmament at the top of the global security agenda. There is no need for this priority to be reconfirmed by the stimulus of yet another detonation.

Circumstances should be favourable for additional progress in this area. At the last NPT Conference the nuclear-weapon States made an unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, leading to nuclear disarmament. This follows a decade-long trend of gradual reductions in the reported or estimated holdings of these — the most dangerous of all — weapons of mass destruction. By some indications, the stockpiles have dropped by about half in this period, while efforts are under way to improve the physical security and accountancy controls over the considerable stocks of weapons and materials that remain.

Some States with nuclear weapons have even started the difficult process of lifting the various veils that had long shrouded their weapons programmes. This is seen in the release of new information about the costs of acquiring and maintaining these arsenals, the gross number of weapons and related nuclear materials produced by some countries and the environmental effects and clean-up budgets, to name a few important subjects. Though much greater progress must be made in all these areas, credit is due for the enlightened efforts of some States to make such pioneering first steps into this all too unfamiliar terrain of genuine public accountability, an essential element of good governance. Even in the field of nuclear testing — and despite the setbacks in South Asia two years ago, or the obstacles facing early entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) — the moratorium on nuclear testing has held and, if reason prevails, will last until such tests are finally outlawed both everywhere and forever.

There are, to be sure, many problems ahead relating both the remaining weapons themselves and to the ideas and doctrines contrived to rationalize their continued production, modernization and use. The cold-war nuclear doctrine of mutual assured destruction — though less emphasized today at the global level — has evolved into a multiplicity of what are called minimum nuclear deterrence strategies. Deterrence, it seems, has produced something of a demonstration effect, as additional countries have come to use adjectives like "essential" and "vital" to characterize such arms.

Hence a tragic irony: nuclear weapons possessed by some countries beget the pursuit of nuclear weapons by other countries, which in turn provides new pretexts for the original possessor States to defer concrete nuclear disarmament initiatives pending the emergence of a more peaceful or stable world order. This is a recipe for perpetual global disorder.

Because of its urgency and complexity, the challenge of global nuclear disarmament remains demanding of our immediate attention. It cannot be consigned to the never-never land of ultimate goals. Nor can it be conditional on the prior achievement of general and complete disarmament, a linkage that fails to acknowledge any strategic, let alone moral, distinction between a nuclear warhead and an AK-47.

Difficult problems relating to transparency, irreversibility, de-alerting, verification and enforcement not only all remain unsolved, but are in many cases not yet even on the table for serious multilateral deliberations. Among the most challenging is the need to craft practical solutions to the problem of building the level of mutual trust needed to achieve the disarmament goal, and the problem of ensuring that disarmament will be sustained by strong institutional support and political will.

While recognizing the enormity of these challenges, let us not forget that billions of diverse peoples throughout the United Nations comprise a reservoir of support for nuclear disarmament. What they are demanding are not palliatives merely to reduce the danger of future nuclear wars. They want to eliminate nuclear threats, not simply to manage them. In short, they want the Disarmament Commission — along with other institutions throughout the United Nations disarmament machinery, relevant regional organizations, and their own national Governments — to get on with the difficult work that lies ahead, not find new excuses for inaction or complacency. Its deliberations must therefore focus on the elaboration of concrete actions that may be necessary to implement agreed norms. The fact that we have come so far is itself an enormous achievement.

The original Disarmament Commission, many will recall, emerged in 1952 after the dissolution of the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission and the United Nations Commission on Conventional Armaments. It is fitting, therefore, that the Commission's 2000 agenda should cover both nuclear disarmament and practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms.

The First Committee has long recognized the importance of confidence-building measures in enhancing international peace and security. For example, 11 of the disarmament-related resolutions approved by the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session made some reference to confidence-building measures. That figure does not include other resolutions that address nuclear weapons issues. The resolutions are cited in reference to the objective reporting of information on military matters; the consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures; transparency in armaments; regional disarmament; regional confidence-building measures with respect to activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa; the work of the United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean; the strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region; and the stability and development of South-Eastern Europe.

As was the case with nuclear weapons, the record with respect to conventional arms control over the last decade also includes some good news. There were definite trends downward both in the aggregate size of defence budgets and in the volume of arms transfers. The Commission added to this progress by reaching a consensus last year on guidelines on conventional arms control, limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on the consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures. Hard work is now under way in preparation for the 2001 Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Others are studying the possibility of developing further the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

Meanwhile, regional efforts are seeking to improve controls over the excess stockpiling or illicit sale of a diverse array of conventional weaponry. In Albania I witnessed first-hand the importance of the de-weaponization of a society, where the voluntary surrender and destruction of excess arms has been combined with community development incentives to produce confidence-building dividends for the country at large.

Another noteworthy achievement in this area was the conclusion last year of the agreement on the adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. More than 70,000 pieces of Treaty-limited equipment have been destroyed under that Treaty and its associated documents, and thousands of on-site inspections have been conducted. The Treaty has substantially increased both the transparency and predictability of military forces in Europe, a region that knows all too well the consequences of general conventional war. Efforts to restrict illicit trafficking in firearms in the Americas and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) moratorium on small arms in West Africa offer additional illustrations of constructive steps that are under way to reduce both the incidence and consequences of war.

It is not surprising that these and other such efforts have generated worldwide interest in improving national and multilateral efforts to reduce the human and economic costs of unrestrained arms competition. Yet the challenges ahead are truly enormous. There are already some warning signs that the military retrenchment following the end of the cold war may now be giving way to some alarming new trends dictated both by demand-side and supply-side pressures. On 14 June, announcing the publication of its 2000 Yearbook, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute reported that global arms expenditures had once again started to rise. According to its analysis, "total world military expenditure increased by 2.1 per cent in real terms in 1999 and amounted to roughly $780 billion. While this is almost one-third less than 10 years earlier, it still represents a significant share of world economic resources: 2. 6 per cent of world gross national product (GNP)".

This is an ominous sign indeed, especially in the light of the qualitative improvements that are under way in all kinds of conventional weaponry. Though the total volume of the international conventional arms trade is still reportedly stable, there seems little question that the mobility, lethality and accuracy of conventional weapons systems may be advancing faster than existing controls can reasonably regulate.

Some countries export arms to achieve expedient political goals that have little to do with national defence. Others continue to produce arms not just for national defence purposes but also to reap bountiful commercial opportunities, a point underscored on 21 June at a United Nations symposium, co-hosted by the Department for Disarmament Affairs, on the restructuring of the global arms industry and its implications.

Further complicating matters, the forces of globalization have for many years been shaping both the production and the distribution of arms, even to the point where the definition of what precisely constitutes an arms export becomes blurred and problematic. Several major arms producers or consumers are also continuing to reduce their cold-war-era arms stocks by sending their surpluses off to market. The addition of diamonds and drugs as means of financing illicit arms deals adds further complexity to the challenges ahead, a point stressed in a report issued last week by the World Bank on the economic causes of civil conflict.

Surely, further progress in the field of conventional arms control will depend heavily upon the fate of diplomacy and ongoing efforts to achieve the peaceful settlement of disputes. This only underscores further the need for confidence-building measures, which are needed not just to restrain or prevent arms races but also to help in alleviating the underlying political or economic forces that feed such races.

Among the various practical confidence-building measures that might be considered is the provision of advisory assistance to Member States, at their request, in safeguarding and improving control over their surplus or obsolete weapons stockpiles, particularly with regard to storage facilities housing small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. In that context, I wish to recall that in its 1997 report the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms recommended that all States should ensure the safeguarding of such surplus weapons against loss through theft or corruption, in particular from storage facilities.

The Commission could also give some consideration to the potential contributions of technology. Though technology is often held responsible for the growing brutality of modern weaponry, it also offers many potentially valuable contributions to international confidence building. The growing availability of high-resolution satellite imagery at reduced cost, for example, can help as an important supplementary means of reassuring countries against imminent invasion threats. Advancements in aerial and ground sensors can work to build confidence

in existing arms control agreements. New telecommunications technologies can be used to reduce the risk of accidents or misunderstandings leading to war. Technology can surely offer no substitute for mutual trust and understanding, but it does offer more than merely the means for mutual annihilation.

The Commission has a difficult road ahead, given the diversity of stakes involved, the variety of motivations for engaging in the arms trade, and the impact of alliance commitments upon national supply policies. There is no inherent reason, however, why a consensus cannot be forged on some specific practical measures that will permit reasonable investments in national security while stemming competitive tendencies leading to arms races and eventually to civil or international wars.

The challenges facing the Disarmament Commission at its 2000 session are formidable. So too must be the Commission's political will to overcome them. Yet progress in disarmament can have its own remarkable effect upon the political climate. In the words of former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold:

> "the very study of disarmament may be the vehicle for progress towards greater international political understanding. This is to say, disarmament is never the result only of the political situation; it is also partly instrumental in creating the political situation. ... We must, I think, show greater patience in this whole field than ever before".

That is wise counsel indeed, and helps to explain his conviction that disarmament had become a "hardy perennial" at the United Nations. Though Hammarskjold did not live to see the end of the cold war, he would surely wish the Commission well in its deliberations and offer us all the hope that this hardy old perennial will finally bear the fruit the world has long been anticipating. I can think of no better way to commence a new millennium and a new page in the history of the United Nations.

The Chairman: I thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs for his support in the past and for his commitment to continue to support the work of the Commission in the future.

Mr. Albuquerque (Portugal): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the 15 States members of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, as well as the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area — Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway — align themselves with this statement.

Let me start, Sir, by congratulating you warmly on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at its 2000 session. We are confident that under your able guidance the new cycle of work of the Disarmament Commission, which we are initiating today and which has been much facilitated by the decision to include just two substantive items on the agenda, will come to successful fruition.

We would also like to convey our congratulations to the representatives of Argentina and of Ghana on their election to chair the subsidiary bodies of the Disarmament Commission, and to wish them every success in the fulfilment of their tasks.

(*spoke in French*)

This year, the Disarmament Commission has appointed a working group for the next two or three sessions to consider ways and means of achieving nuclear disarmament. When adopting the terms of reference of that group, the Disarmament Commission set an ambitious target. It is seeking to tackle in a general way one of the most important and controversial subjects of the international debate now under way in the relevant multilateral forums.

Mr. Rowe (Sierra Leone), Vice-President, took the Chair.

By statute, the mission of the Disarmament Commission is indeed to formulate, in a spirit of consensus, practical recommendations to the General Assembly and to assist all Member States with respect to their national policies in the relevant areas. It is the intention of the European Union and of the other States that have aligned themselves with this statement to lend full support to the Chairman's efforts to carry out that mission.

If the debate on nuclear disarmament is a difficult one, it is because it directly touches the security interests of the States that possess nuclear weapons, of their allies, and of States that have not renounced the

acquisition of these weapons and that are thus not in a position to become non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Nevertheless, there is universal consensus on the objective of achieving nuclear disarmament. The problem is how to reach that objective, and at what pace.

For its part, the European Union approaches this question in a pragmatic spirit and with respect for the legitimate positions of all its members. Our conviction, which has been the basis of all negotiated disarmament endeavours from the outset, is that disarmament must increase the security of all, and must not be undertaken to the detriment of anyone or ignoring the broad panorama of the international strategic stability on which peace rests. That approach has enabled the European Union to encompass the broad outlines of the multilateral debate while agreeing on common positions that often open up fertile avenues for reflection by nations. A good recent example is the common position adopted on the eve of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) Review Conference, held in April and May. So far as nuclear disarmament is concerned, that position in many respects prefigures many of the points made in the Final Document that was adopted by the parties to the Treaty.

We take the same approach to the work of the Disarmament Commission strengthened by thorough analysis and the recent successes achieved in this field. The Disarmament Commission concluded its work in 1999 with the adoption by consensus of an excellent report on the delicate question of establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones. The most recent NPT Review Conference was also crowned with success for the 187 States parties in its task of taking stock and examining the implementation of the Treaty in all its aspects. However, we regret that the Conference on Disarmament still had difficulty in coming up with a work programme acceptable to all its members before the end of the year 2000 session.

The current challenge for the European Union is to consolidate in an irreversible fashion the cessation of the arms race that resulted from the end of the cold war, to move steadily towards nuclear disarmament and to strengthen the international nuclear-weapon non-proliferation regime. We consider that the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, concluded on 24 September 1996, together with the immediate initiation and rapid conclusion of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a treaty prohibiting the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons, can allow us to meet a considerable part of this challenge. We will spare no effort to ensure that work towards these ends proceeds without delay.

(*spoke in English*)

The European Union welcomes the inclusion of the issue of practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons in the agenda of the current Disarmament Commission session because as we enter the new millennium, a time in which promising trends and troubling developments so often coexist uneasily, tools that have been used in the past, both to prevent conflicts and in post-conflict situations, have proved at times irrelevant or obsolete. Hence there is a need to look for more effective ways to create a climate conducive to peace, stability and security and to its consolidation, not only in specific contexts, but also globally.

Confidence-building measures are seen more and more as the most appropriate tools for achieving these objectives, because of their impressive diversity and flexibility, covering a broad spectrum of security, political, humanitarian and military realms, and even providing early-warning systems for potential conflicts. The Union has been involved in and encourages the adoption of such approaches, especially in situations that have proved more intractable and difficult to resolve, and where an evolutionary process is more likely to produce results, namely, by institutionalizing step-by-step mechanisms and patterns of cooperation. The objective is to establish new patterns of interaction that will be perceived as beneficial by the parties involved and to make these patterns harder to reverse when perturbations occur. Transparency and predictability are, in this regard, key concepts.

Regarding conventional weapons, we recall, for instance, our support for the Stockholm and Vienna Documents regimes, both comprehensive confidence-building measures that laid down the provisions for the exchange and verification of information regarding armed forces and military activities, as well as certain mechanisms for promoting cooperation in regard to military matters in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) area. These documents constitute the cornerstone for confidence-building measures on conventional arms in Europe.

The Union considers transparency in armaments a fundamental instrument in building confidence and security among States. The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, which was proposed by the Netherlands, is an important and concrete measure in this respect. The Register provides data on international arms transfers of those categories of conventional arms that are potentially destabilizing when accumulated excessively. It serves to enhance transparency, build confidence and promote better understanding among States; hence our commitment to secure the widest possible participation in the Register and to improve its effectiveness in a manner that would make a positive contribution to regional and subregional confidence-building efforts.

The Union would like also to reiterate its endorsement of General Assembly resolution 54/43, "Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures" and resolution 54/54 H, "Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures". The EU welcomes the activities undertaken by the group of interested States to implement them. In our view, these resolutions, both introduced by Germany, add a very positive contribution to the enhancement and development of confidence-building measures.

Likewise, we recall our support for the May 1996 Disarmament Commission guidelines for international arms transfers as well as its later guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace.

The EU also welcomes the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms. Its recommendations on reduction and prevention are particularly pertinent to the creation of solid confidence-building measures.

Regarding small arms and light weapons, the EU Programme for Preventing and Combating Illicit Trafficking in Conventional Arms, adopted on 26 June 1997, and the subsequent Code of Conduct have enshrined confidence-building-measure elements.

The EU Joint Action for a comprehensive approach to small arms, covering both preventive and reactive measures to tackle the issue, also encompasses confidence-building measures. In this spirit we have undertaken to provide technical and financial assistance to programmes and projects related to the small-arms problem, notably in Cambodia and Mozambique, and we are considering specific actions in other areas as well. We welcomed the moratorium on the export and manufacture of light weapons by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The EU as well as many of its member States have been providing economic support for this moratorium.

We believe that these initiatives, primarily designed to achieve other ends, encapsulate critical elements of communication, transparency and verification, which, together with constraint, constitute the main tools of confidence-building measures.

We are fully committed to a successful outcome of the 2001 conference on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, and we believe that confidence-building measures should constitute a critical element in the final product. They are clearly stated in our working paper circulated during the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for this conference to be possible solutions to be applied where and when appropriate and useful.

Confidence-building measures play a vital role in the creation of a cooperative security policy environment. They can, in particular, form the basis of a network of confidence-building, including political, economic and social measures, in addition to military measures. Non-military and military measures constitute a mutually reinforcing process in promoting security and stability. The EU therefore supports and encourages efforts aimed at promoting comprehensive confidence-building measures.

The EU believes that the Disarmament Commission can make a useful contribution to the further promotion of such measures by preparing a catalogue of possible military and non-military confidence-building measures. These measures could include enhanced exchange of military information and data, including information on defence planning; enhanced cooperation in military activities, including mechanisms for consultation and cooperation regarding unusual military activities; measures to improve the democratic structure of armed forces; prior notification and observation of certain military activities; measures on military disengagement; promotion of confidence and security through joint actions of armed forces in civilian emergency measures, including elimination of environmental damage, joint activities for sea rescues and joint activities in sea mine clearance by armed

forces. Non-military measures could include transborder customs cooperation and networks for information-sharing among law enforcement agencies and joint border and customs control activities.

Consideration should also be given, where appropriate, to regional and subregional instruments or a code of conduct to enhance control and restraint in the legal transfer of conventional arms, as well as to combat the illicit trafficking in those arms.

The EU member States for their part will continue to participate actively in all appropriate forums to discuss transparency measures and other confidence-building measures that can contribute to increased security among all Member States of the United Nations.

We in the European Union look forward to the transformation of our deliberations into a more substantive and results-oriented programme of work, which can take the form of recommendations and guidelines as possible solutions to be applied where and when appropriate and useful.

Mr. De Moura (Brazil): I wish to congratulate Mr. Zarif on his election to preside over our work, and the members of the Bureau. They may all be assured of the cooperation of the Brazilian delegation in seeking a successful outcome for our deliberations.

I also pay tribute to our previous Chairman, Minister Abdel Aziz, and to Minister Angélica Arce de Jeannet, who skilfully conducted consultations in her capacity as Acting Chairman. We also support and appreciate the work of Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala and his team.

Today, we are beginning a new three-year cycle in this Commission. We have before us a long process that will, hopefully, lead us to the adoption of consensual texts in important disarmament matters. In our view, this process can end well only if it starts well. The positive results we all expect to achieve will depend, to a great extent, on the spirit of cooperation demonstrated since the beginning of our discussions. Consensus-building efforts should be a constant feature of our deliberations so as to establish the necessary political environment to help us, in the words of Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala earlier, "to discover paths to solve concrete problems in an all-too-real world".

We are pleased to see Argentina presiding over the Working Group on confidence-building measures in the area of conventional arms. Given our countries' bilateral experience in confidence-building measures, we can rest assured that Argentina will be able to make an important contribution to our deliberations in the exercise of this responsibility. Our compliments and support extend to our friend from Ghana on his election to preside over the Working Group on nuclear disarmament.

As one of the few countries that have been practising the greatest degree of transparency in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, Brazil believes that Member States should strive to transform the Register into an even more relevant confidence-building tool. That would require the timely provision of data relating to exports and imports of arms covered by the Register, and of information concerning acquisitions from domestic manufacturers, as well as military holdings.

Another important global confidence-building measure is the instrument for standardized international reporting of military expenditures. Regrettably, last year only 35 countries presented their information to the Department of Disarmament Affairs.

Measures taken at the regional level can also help to strengthen United Nations instruments. The Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions, for example, makes it obligatory for its signatories to provide to the Organization of American States information on military exchanges, national procurement and holdings, bearing in mind the need to contribute to the openness and transparency at which the United Nations Register aims.

Progress in the conventional arms field should not distract us from the instability and uncertainty in the nuclear area. Discouraging signs include paralysis in the Conference on Disarmament, challenges to the nuclear non-proliferation regime, rejection of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty by the United States Senate and proposals for changes in the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty that may undermine its role as the cornerstone of strategic stability. All of this is aggravated by the lack of clearly identified mobilizing paths to which the international community could resort.

The 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was a very positive note, which we hope will have a positive impact on negotiations in different multilateral bodies. Brazil is of the view that the momentum created by the results of the Conference should serve as an additional encouragement for this Commission. We are sure that, provided there is enough political will, the Commission will greatly benefit from the spirit that prevailed at that time. That development, which was greatly welcomed, should be followed up by constructive approaches in other disarmament discussions, including here. Otherwise, the achievement of progress at the Conference will unfortunately be seen as an isolated event.

As recently stated by the heads of State of the Rio Group,

> "nuclear disarmament is the responsibility of all States, particularly of the nuclear-weapon States, and it is incumbent upon the international community, represented in the United Nations, to adopt concrete measures to promote non-proliferation and the elimination of nuclear weapons".

The Rio Group summit final declaration also expressed satisfaction at the results of the NPT Review Conference, which included an unequivocal undertaking for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

The New Agenda Coalition has presented a blueprint that can be used to attain that goal. Many of the New Agenda Coalition ideas could also be helpful in trying to devise ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament, which is the subject of one of the substantive items of this session. In this context, we support the proposal — which would undoubtedly be of help in achieving nuclear disarmament — presented by the Secretary-General in his report on the Millennium Summit, to convene a major international conference that would identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate the importance Brazil attaches to the Disarmament Commission as a universal forum devoted to long-term general disarmament discussions. We believe that the Disarmament Commission is the appropriate body to freely discuss future options in the field of disarmament.

The Commission's relevance is all the more evident in the light of the disarmament picture, which, despite progress on the NPT, does not give us hope for further optimism. Brazil comes to this meeting having decided to build upon what we have and to help the Disarmament Commission to assert its value and significance among the multilateral disarmament forums.

Ms. Martinic (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, on behalf of the delegation of Argentina, to congratulate Mr. Zarif on his election to preside over our work. We have no doubt that his ability and broad diplomatic experience will enable him to guide our work with wisdom. I also extend my delegation's congratulations to the other members of the Bureau and thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, for his presence here today and for his statement.

As we enter the new millennium, the renunciation of weapons of mass destruction is of the highest priority. Despite the positive balance in our collective disarmament and non-proliferation efforts, the risk of proliferation persists, and this is a matter of concern. It is therefore necessary for all States to renounce the nuclear option and to give unambiguous guarantees that the nuclear capacity will be used exclusively for peaceful purposes.

Fortunately, in this respect there is consensus among 187 States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), as set out in the Final Document of the sixth Review Conference, held in April and May 2000. Nevertheless, for Argentina, nuclear disarmament objectives will not be fully met until nuclear weapons have been completely eliminated.

It is therefore important to highlight the reaffirmation by the States parties to the Treaty in the final document of their commitment to article VI of the Treaty and the agreement on a series of practical steps for a systematic and progressive effort to implement the article.

Those steps include appeals for the signing and ratification required for the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the immediate initiation of negotiations within the Conference on Disarmament on a treaty prohibiting the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, with a view to concluding it within the next five years.

Argentina believes that the final document reaffirms efforts to move towards nuclear disarmament and to avoid the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and that it strengthens the basic standards regulating the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

While renewing these commitments is a positive development, we must bear in mind that the qualified language requires caution with regard to expectations of concrete progress, especially in the field of disarmament.

Argentina contributed to the 2000 NPT Review Conference objectives in terms of universality, nuclear disarmament, nuclear-weapon-free zones, security guarantees, safeguards, controls on nuclear exports and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. In the context of the results we had hoped to achieve, these objectives could be considered to have been met on safeguards, nuclear-weapon-free zones and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Some progress was made in other areas, although the balance of commitments makes it necessary to continue working towards the future.

The substantive meetings of the Disarmament Commission, as the specialized deliberative body within the multilateral disarmament mechanism of the United Nations for the purpose of presenting concrete recommendations, provide a suitable setting to continue dealing with the steps to be taken to achieve nuclear disarmament.

Confidence-building measures with regard to conventional weapons, which this Commission should tackle within the next three years, is particularly important to Argentina, which perceives international security in terms of self-sustaining concentric circles, which are not exclusive or competitive among themselves. In that regard, our security and defence priority is our neighbours, whom we regard as partners and not as rivals or potential sources of conflict. We are convinced that the close association with them that we are working towards will give all of us enhanced regional, hemispheric and global integration.

In this context, the changes ushered in by the re-establishment of democracy in our countries have produced a series of concrete actions, whose common denominators are strengthened political integration with neighbouring countries, intensified hemispheric dialogue, the prohibition of weapons of mass destruction, the growing limitation of some types of conventional weapons and active participation in international affairs, bringing about a stable and peaceful world based on the values of democracy, the rule of law, human rights and free markets.

Examples of areas in which Argentina is working at the bilateral, regional and subregional levels include: the declaration of MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile as a zone of peace; the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisition; the work of the Ad Hoc Group of the Rio Group on limiting conventional weapons, Tlatelolco II; the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction; the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Illegal Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials; meetings of Foreign Ministers and Defence Ministers; meetings of the Ministers of the Americas; mechanisms for consultation on defence and international defence; the work entrusted to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) to draft a comparative analysis of defence spending; joint exercises; mechanisms for consultation among the larger States; combined action at the political level; increased participation of observers in the military exercises of other countries; the exchange of teachers and students from military training academies; fulfilment of commitments under the United Nations Conventional Arms Register; bilateral scientific and technological cooperation; cooperation in matters related to operations to deal with disasters; peacekeeping operations, the coordination of policies and the possibility of joint troop contingents.

Argentina has great expectations of the work of this Commission, because we are convinced of the contribution we can make to the achievement of disarmament objectives. We hope this will be a fruitful session that will enable us to establish a stable foundation for the work of the coming years. Therefore the full cooperation of the delegation of Argentina is guaranteed.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.